

English Summary

There were many museums whose creation was publicly proposed and discussed but which never opened in Warsaw. Of those, this book, entitled *Museums-pretexs. Unimplemented museum projects and negative heritage in Warsaw*, like my doctoral dissertation on which it is based, presents the unimplemented concepts of museums which were formulated after the breakthrough moments in twentieth-century history that affected Poland (and its capital, Warsaw, in particular), namely the regaining of independence by the Polish state (1918), the end of the Second World War (1945), and the fall of communism (1989). These historical events were accompanied by three unfulfilled museum concepts: i) the idea of converting the former Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevsky on Saxon Square (today's Piłsudski Square) into the "civil treasury of the nation", as proposed by Polish writer Stefan Żeromski in the ending of his 1918 narrative poem *Wisła* [River Vistula]; ii) the plans developed in the late 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s for the post-war reconstruction of the Royal Castle, with a view to creating a national museum of Polish culture in its interiors; iii) the visions of locating an anti-communist museum of communism in the Palace of Culture and Science, a Stalinist skyscraper built in the mid-1950s in Warsaw's city centre that emerged in the public discourse from the 1980s to the late 2000s.

All the institutions discussed in the book were planned as museums of supra-local (more or less: Polish national) history, and each of them had a clearly defined location, or target site, in a historical monumental building in Warsaw that was perceived as an iconic city landmark, but also, for various reasons, as symbolically controversial "negative heritage" (Meskell 2002; here and after, see the Bibliography at the end of this book for the full references), entangled with a recently overcome difficult past, respectively: the Russian Empire's rule over Central and Eastern Poland (1815–1915), the Nazi German occupation (1939–1945), and dependency on the Soviet Union (1945–1989). Consequently, each time the concept of the museum served as a pretext for an adaptation, conversion, transformation, or even reconstruction, of such a building, but then lost its importance when the building in question was demolished or when competing proposals for another use of its interiors (or location) were implemented instead.

In the book I point not only to visions created in architectural or urban planning studios (plans, sketches, drawings with accompanying guidelines, explanations and commentaries by experts); I am equally interested in the concepts that found their expression in various kinds of public texts: in ideological manifestos and (meta)political programmes, in prose and essays, in official documents, civic projects and opinions collected through public consultation, and, finally, in comments published in newspapers and broadcast in other media (including the voice of the public). Therefore, the book differs from classic museum studies works in both the issue it raises (museums that have never been established) and the methodological approach upon which it is based, one that links museums with the city as a physical and cultural space where various social actors engage in disputes over cultural heritage and institutions of memory. As such, it is an attempt to answer questions about the lifecycle of cultural institutions and ways of dealing with negative heritage in the urban cultural landscape.

This work forms part of the ECHOES Project, which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 770248. The research was carried out within Work Package 3, "City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts", designed and led by Prof. Joanna Wawrzyniak. The book primarily focuses on Warsaw's multiple colonial past, drawing on the notion of "multiple colonialisms", as conceived by the ECHOES Project's Principal Investigator John Oldfield, who claimed that "Eastern Europe can properly be considered a zone of multiple colonialisms. Torn between great land empires in the nineteenth century, it was subjugated to the Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century" (Oldfield 2018). This idea, which has been widely applied and discussed in other ECHOES Work Package 3 deliverables (Bukowiecki and Wawrzyniak 2019; Bukowiecki, Wawrzyniak and Wróblewska 2020), relies on the assumption that as different periods of the political dependence of the Polish territories on foreign powers have been described in various streams of literature as "colonial", they therefore might be considered, when taken together, as a multiple colonial past in which different external dominant groups shaped and re-shaped the cityscape of Warsaw, while the local subordinated groups tried to resist and overcome those efforts.

*Museum-pretex*ts allows its readers to discover lesser-known episodes in the development of Warsaw museology over the last century by addressing the issues of mutual relations between city development, cultural policy, social activism, and the protection of cultural heritage. The results, formulated on the basis of a critical analysis of historical events and processes, may find their contemporary application in at least two socially significant dimensions of urban cultural policy, broadly conceived: firstly, the policy towards museums and other institutions shaping social memory and, secondly, conservation policy towards negative heritage, including architectural objects considered controversial, dissonant, uncomfortable, or otherwise "unwanted".